



2003 Annual Report



Message from the Regional Director



NPS Alaska Regional Director Marcia Blaszak

Like many people who came here from jobs in the Lower 48, I find it hard to believe I'm starting my 10th year with the National Park Service in Alaska, and my 35th year as a federal employee.

Those numbers are active reminders of two things. First, Alaska continues to be the highlight of my career. Nowhere else in the National Park System is there such a vast and incredible array of national park units and programs all working in their own ways toward the conservation of our national heritage. Second, as I reflect on a long and rewarding career in the Service, I am reminded just how much we as an organization have changed.

My appointment in August 2003 as the acting regional director for Alaska was an unprecedented career step for a woman when my career began in 1968; today, no one really thinks twice about it.

For many of the past 35 years, the National Park Service — like many large organizations — has gone about its business largely by itself, serving

millions of visitors but frequently not making significant efforts to connect with communities, businesses, non-profit associations, interest groups and others who are, collectively, our partners in the mission of being stewards of America's national parks.

In recent years, the change toward working more closely with partners has accelerated and is now becoming a fundamental piece of our organizational culture. This annual report provides details on the kinds of work we are doing with others to accomplish not only the missions given to the National Park Service by Congress, but how the expertise and experience within the Service is helping Alaska communities and organizations accomplish their goals.

These partnerships take many forms, but a few special ones come to mind. The highly skilled volunteers who join the month-long mountaineering patrols on Mount McKinley were recognized this fall for work that has saved lives and made the mountain a cleaner, safer environment. In a very different venue, our partners at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art have worked with us on the Greatland Junior Ranger "Dino-Might" project in conjunction with the display of the T-Rex Sue. And we've worked successfully with the state of Alaska to build a more public process for the annual renewal of short-term park rules, called compendiums.

These kinds of partnerships, and dozens more, are helping the National Park Service accomplish its missions more effectively and with greater public participation than ever before. Throughout my Park Service career I've learned a great deal on the job, and we as an organization are doing the same — changing, and learning on the job. We welcome your participation as we join with partners to accomplish our mission of preservation and public enjoyment.

New Leaders

The National Park Service welcomed several new people into key leadership positions in 2003.

Alaska Regional Director Rob Arnberger retired in July, and his deputy, **Marcia Blaszak**, took over as acting regional director. A new regional director is expected to be named early in 2004. Several changes also were made among the ranks of park superintendents.



Julie Hopkins returned to Kotzebue as superintendent of Western Arctic Parklands, overseeing Kobuk Valley National Park, Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Noatak National Preserve. A 21-year

Alaska resident, she previously served as assistant superintendent there and worked two years overseeing budget issues at the Anchorage regional office.

Another longtime Alaska manager took charge as superintendent of Sitka National Historical Park. **Greg Dudgeon** left a superintendent's post in Utah to return to Alaska. From 1996 to 2001, he served in Kotzebue and Nome as chief ranger at Northwest Alaska park units. Between 1990 and 1996, Dudgeon worked for the National Marine Fisheries Service in Yakutat, and as a river ranger for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

Brad Bennett became the superintendent at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve in Nome in late summer 2003. A career NPS manager and planner, he came to Alaska briefly in 2002 in a management development program to work

with community leaders in Kotzebue. He helped author planning documents for the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center in Kotzebue which is currently under design.



Joe Fowler was named to the top job at Katmai National Park and Preserve in November. He had been the chief of operations for Katmai, and

had served as chief ranger at Lake Clark National Park earlier in his career. He resides in King Salmon.



Joel Hard was named in December as the newest superintendent, taking the top job at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Hard worked previously for the Alaska State Troopers, where he led the Public Safety, Fish and Wildlife Protection Division. He grew up in Juneau, is a licensed pilot and is a 1994 graduate of the FBI's National Academy.





Alaska's national parks receive about 2 million visitors a year, ranging from a high of 700,000 at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park in Skagway to just several thousand at the remote and weather-challenged Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve on the Alaska Peninsula. The past year saw significant accomplishments made in building and opening facilities to serve these visitors.

Denali National Park continued to move forward with a \$30 million renovation of the park's entrance area. The summer of 2004 will see the opening of the park's new Science and Learning Center, an expanded railroad depot and improved roads and parking. A new visitor center will open in 2005, and will feature a theater, interpretive exhibits, food court and bookstore. The frontcountry facelift has also provided a new camper convenience store, campground renovations and better traffic flow. On the park road, which sees more than 300,000 visitors each summer, 50 new buses will be phased in

over the next two years, providing cleaner, quieter rides into the park.

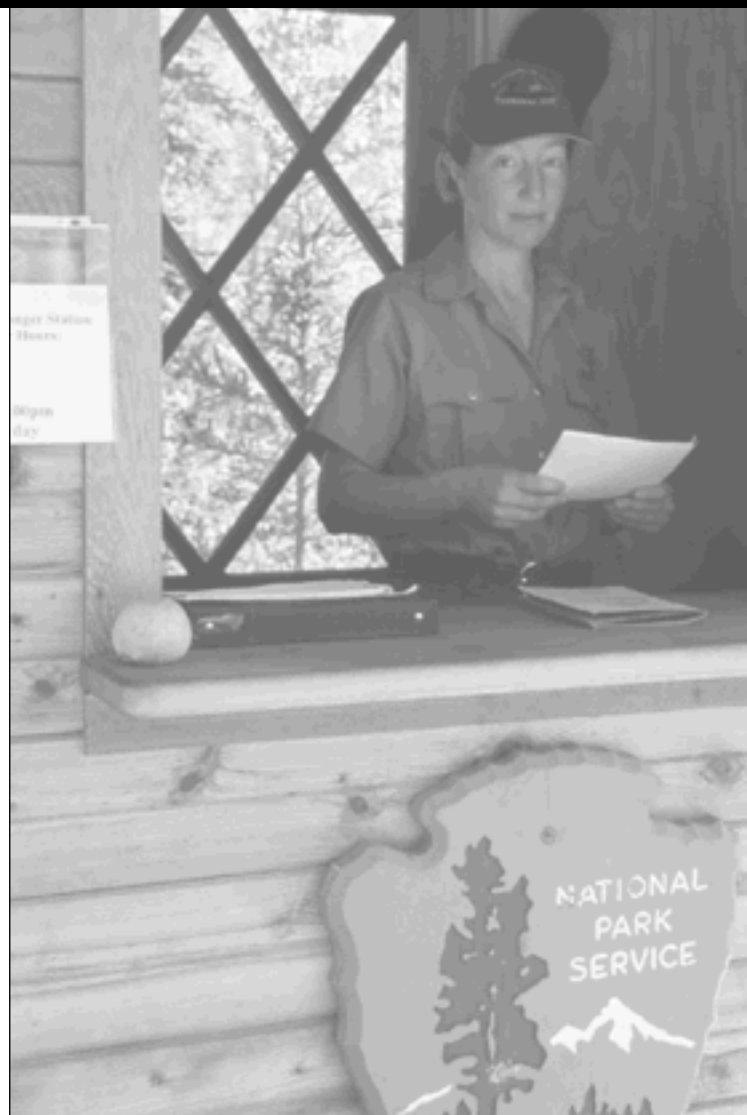
Far to the north on the Dalton Highway, the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center will have its first full season of operation in 2004. Operated by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management, the center is located in Coldfoot within Trans-Alaska Pipeline Corridor. The center will orient road travelers to the arctic environment that lies to the north, and provides backcountry users with information for safe adventures. Eight million adventurous acres of Gates of the Arctic National Park are just west and north of Coldfoot.

Improvements have continued at Exit Glacier in Kenai Fjords National Park. A new nature center was completed in 2003, and brings to a close construction work that has included road and parking lot paving, restroom construction and trail improvements. The park is also planning to

provide electrical service to its facilities in 2004 with a propane-powered fuel cell. The unusual alternative energy project is the first of its kind to be used in such a remote location. A major long-term project for the park also advanced in 2003, as the park worked with the city of Seward and others to complete a waterfront study which will place a new, multi-agency visitor center in a redeveloped waterfront area near the Alaska SeaLife Center.

Significant progress was made in the development of the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center in 2003, as efforts focused on completion of the environmental assessment which is expected in early 2004. In September, Charles Bettisworth and Co. of Fairbanks was hired to design the building and architects are working with exhibit designers to lead to the next phase of development. The center will be owned by a nonprofit corporation composed of the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Tanana Chiefs Conference, while the Alaska Public Lands Information Center, managed by the National Park Service, will be a tenant occupying about 15,350 square feet. The estimated cost is \$24 million. Currently \$10 million is available from the federal government. The partners will mount a capital campaign to raise the remaining \$14 million, with a goal of requesting bids for the construction of the building in October 2005.

The most noticeable construction project in the state was not in a park, but on 5th Avenue in downtown Anchorage. Opened in July, the new leased building provides office space for the NPS Alaska Regional Office and curatorial storage facilities for many of the cultural resource items collected in Alaska's parks.



The National Park Service administers 16 units with a total of more than 54 million acres.

PARTNERS / Volunteers

The missions of the National Park Service could not be accomplished without the steadfast assistance of a variety of partners. Across Alaska, these collaborative efforts take many forms. Over the next few pages, a few examples are highlighted but are by no means inclusive of the many organizations which work with the NPS in communities around the state.

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve is extraordinarily fortunate in having two outstanding husband and wife teams of volunteers. Both park managers and park visitors are very well served by these two fine pairs of volunteers.

Jerry Mills and his wife, Jeanette, have worked at the Telaquana Ranger Station for the past six summers. They participate in various park operations such as visitor services, law enforcement, maintenance, cultural resource protection, and natural resource studies with park staff and the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

In addition, Jeanette Mills has been transcribing some 78 pounds(!) of Richard Proenneke's journals. The task entails many hours of painstaking reading of difficult handwriting and typing voluminous amounts of material in preparation for publication. Proenneke, who lived alone at Twin



Lakes for more than 30 years, died in 2003. His journals offer a daily account of an observant life in remote setting.

Husband and wife Monroe Robinson and Kay Schubeck have been stationed at Proenneke's cabin for the past four years. Both knew Proenneke personally and they interpret the site with enthusiasm and great knowledge. Kay has also helped preserve a number of Proenneke's personal items including books, tools, and furniture. For three years, Monroe has rehabilitated the cabin, woodshed, and cache to a very fine condition. His work reversed the normal weathering process on the 35-year-old structures, restoring them to Proenneke's original excellence.



Volunteers are regular participants on National Park Service patrols during the mountaineering season on Mount McKinley. They participate in rescues, advise climbers about route conditions, and help climbers manage trash and other waste. The people tackling this high-altitude and high-risk job were honored in 2003 by the Department of the Interior with a Take Pride in America Award, presented in Washington D.C.

T Established in 2001, the Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center is a partnership dedicated to understanding and preserving the marine ecosystem connecting Alaska's 10 coastal national parks through sponsorship of cooperative research and education programs. The core partners are Kenai Fjords National Park and the Alaska SeaLife Center in Seward.

Other partners include the Smithsonian Institution, Pratt Museum, Port Graham Village Corporation, Dallas Museum of Natural History, University of Alaska, University of Arizona, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, and Kenai Fjords Tours.

Projects in 2003 included a study of coastal black bear demographics in the park, which will be incorporated into bear management and backcountry use management plans. Another significant study is of harbor seals. The seal population has declined by more than 90% in Kenai Fjords. This cooperative multi-organizational,

multi-disciplinary project is employing state-of-the-art methods to identify and understand the root causes of the decline and, through a cooperation with all partners, recommend and implement resource management actions to stabilize the population.

An ethnography and archaeology study of Kenai Fjords will begin its third year in 2004. A continuing cooperative program with the Smithsonian and Pratt Museum to unearth the poorly known archaeology of Kenai Fjords, the villages of Port Graham and Nanwalek are assisting with the project.

The Learning Center has also served as a sponsor for the 2003 Student Ocean Conference, a cooperative effort with the state of Alaska and University of Alaska Fairbanks. The center has an ongoing education role, with offerings that include a junior/senior high school oceanography course and outreach programs to remote villages.

T he Building Trades program is the most visible part of Denali National Park's school to work partnership program. In the program, the park works with local high school students to design small replacement housing units that will be used in the park for housing seasonal employees.

Once the designs are complete, the park purchases the building materials. Denali also provides a half-time carpenter to work with the high school instructor to provide journeyman level instruction for the students throughout the project. Students take part in every aspect of construction, which includes framing, plumbing, electrical wiring, finish carpentry and painting.

The students develop very strong work ethics and skills in this program, as well as a strong connection with the park. In addition to benefiting from a local source for needed buildings, the park has brought some of the program's students into its regular workforce.



The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program has pioneered a statewide cooperative project to demonstrate GPS technology as a cost effective and accurate technology for establishing legal public access to important recreation trails. To date, cooperative projects with four regional and two state government agencies have resulted in 83 trail system maps totaling more than 500 miles. The RTCA program is also assisting the Municipality of Anchorage and Chugach State Park in the development of a trail mapping strategy for the more than 400 miles of trails within the municipality.

The RTCA staff in Anchorage joined in an effort to bring about the establishment of a statewide non-profit organization in 2003. Alaska Trails will attract and disburse non-government funding, provide technical assistance to local trail groups and partner with land management agencies regarding trail issues.

The RTCA staff helped host a statewide trails conference in October which addressed pressing trail needs and technical issues, and drew participation from many partners including the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage, Alaska State Parks, Fairbanks-North Star Borough, Polaris Industries and the U.S. Forest Service.

<http://www.nps.gov/akso/riversandtrails>



In Skagway, a different kind of partnership has grown between the community and park during the 27 years since its establishment. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park makes an economic impact on the town's economy amounting to more than \$4 million per year, according to a 2003 study by a Juneau research firm.

The historical park, which manages 15 historic buildings in downtown Skagway and the American side of the Chilkoot Trail, had an economic impact of about \$4.1 million in 2002, the report found. Over the past seven years, which includes a period of significant funding related to the restoration and maintenance of historic buildings, the economic impact was estimated at \$473 million for the National Park Service by Southeast Strategies, a Juneau-based economics and planning firm.

The report found that about 32 jobs or 7% of all Skagway jobs were attributable to direct and related NPS, including NPS personnel and indirect jobs based on NPS operations and construction. The economic impact of construction-related work since 1983 totaled \$32.4 million, generating an average of 11 fulltime jobs per year.

Additionally, private businesses operating in NPS-restored buildings generated \$185,000 in sales tax for local government operations in 2001. Other aspects of the partnership have included an improved 911 dispatch system and collaborative efforts aimed at preserving Gold Rush artifacts.

*A copy of the report is available at
<http://www.nps.gov/klgo/pphtml/facts.html>*

One of the National Park Service's oldest partnerships in Alaska is with the Alaska Natural History Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing understanding and conservation of the natural, cultural and historical resources of Alaska's public lands.

The association serves as the non-profit partner for all federal land managers in Alaska, but the largest portion of its activities is with national parks. The association's traditional role has been as a publisher and seller of educational and interpretive materials. In this role, it operates bookstore outlets in each of Alaska's national parks, publishes park newspapers for several units, publishes other educational and interpretive material for parks, and provides the editorial and design expertise for Alaska Park Science, a twice yearly magazine highlighting research in Alaska's parks. The coming year will see the first volumes in a series of books on each of Alaska's national parks, the continuing production of Alaska Park Science, and other park-specific publications.

Recently, the association has grown to take on a broader role as an education partner, growing its membership and expanding the scope of its programs. The membership and other activities in turn support several education and scientific programs in parks, and in 2004, the association expects to provide at least \$150,000 in direct support to national parks in Alaska.

A major expansion for the association in 2003 was a move to bring the Denali Institute under the association's umbrella. The institute has worked with Denali National Park for several years, providing educational seminars and field trips. The completion in 2004 of the \$1.4 million Denali Science and Learning Center, a \$1.4 million facility in the entrance area of Denali, will raise the profile of the educational partnership with the institute. For park visitors and Alaska residents, the Institute provides 2-3 hour science-based education programs daily in the summer, 2-3 day field seminars, teacher training, and opportunities to participate in field research.

<http://www.alaskanha.org>

While national parks have always been unique natural laboratories, recent research is telling the public more about what's living in Alaska's national parks than ever before.

At Glacier Bay, it was long thought only one amphibian called the park home, that being the boreal toad. In the past year, a new species was found in the park, the northwestern salamander. The secretive six-inch salamander seems to have escaped detection because until recently no one was looking for them. And in a park known for whales and giant glaciers, why is the Park Service interested in toads and salamanders? Amphibians, it turns out, are being recognized as good indicators of environmental change over time. Keeping track of their numbers, their variety and any deformities can help indicate changes in the environment.

Like the Glacier Bay example, finding the fauna you're looking for is sometimes a matter of starting to look, while at other times the challenge is



to find a particular animal. In Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, a new kind of radio collar is being used to study wolves. The collars collect GPS (Global Positioning System) locations at any rate the biologist chooses, stores the data in the collar, and then downloads the information via satellite to the biologist's computer.

Wolves in Yukon-Charley "report in" daily, and download once a week. The collars are expected to last three years, giving biologists a whopping seven times as much data at about one-fourth the costs of the conventional aircraft surveys. This dramatic increase in data allows unprecedented estimates of wolf density and pack movement.

Science stories like these are also getting more public exposure than ever, thanks to a twice-yearly magazine published by the NPS through the Alaska Natural History Association. Alaska Park Science features stories about research in parks. The magazine is distributed to parks, libraries and science teachers throughout Alaska.

A printable version of Alaska Park Science is also available on the Web at <http://www.nps.gov/akso/AKParkScience/index.htm>



Planning

Several significant plans were completed or were presented in draft form for public comment during 2003.

The numbers of cruise ships and private vessels using Glacier Bay in the summer could increase and the system for managing motor vessels in the park will be simplified according to a final environmental impact statement on vessel quotas and operating requirements released late in 2003.

The document concluded a process started in 1997 when the National Park Service was sued in by the National Parks Conservation Association, which asserted the NPS should have prepared a more detailed EIS rather than an environmental assessment to evaluate changes in the operating requirements and numbers of vessels allowed in Glacier Bay. More than 1,000 comments from individuals, interest groups, agencies and businesses were offered in the spring of 2003. "Our preferred alternative allows for growth in visitation, provides additional resource protection and simplifies the vessel management system," said Park Superintendent Tomie Lee.

The Draft Denali Backcountry Management Plan was distributed for review in spring 2003, and over 9,500 public comments were received. The plan updates and expands upon the 1976 Backcountry Management Plan as well as amends the 1986 General Management Plan. The goal is to continue to provide for a range of visitor opportunities in the backcountry while protecting the internationally significant resources of the park and preserve. The park hopes to manage growth so that in the long term a greater number of users can experience the park with reduced environmental impacts.

Based on the extensive public comments received, the park may produce a supplemental draft in 2004 for further public review before finalizing the plan.

Denali will also continue working with the state of Alaska, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and a variety of other interests on a development plan for the south side of the park. Congress appropriated \$750,000 for work in the coming year.



The National Park System has been likened to a great university system with nearly 400 campuses across the country. While parks nationally receive more than 275 million visits annually, most people — even in a lifetime — only visit a handful of parks. Yet lessons about our natural world, America's past, and some of the turning point social issues of our time are represented by park units and affiliated areas which conserve the places where these nation-changing events took place.

Alaska's national parks represent a great sweep of American history, from beach ridges and mountain passes in Northwest Alaska where the hunting tools of early North Americans are found, to the stark reminders of World War II battles at Dutch Harbor.

In 2003, the Service was successful in several efforts to expand the educational offerings of parks and affiliated areas so the lessons are available not just to visitors, but in schools, over the Internet, and in a variety of publications and broadcasts.



Geobears are extremely popular with students across the State of Alaska. Classes can borrow the Geobear kit, which comes with a logbook, tape recorder and camera. The bear is then sent to national parks across the country and the class receives post cards and information about those parks.

The Aleutian World War II National Historic Site was featured in several outreach efforts, as 2003 marked the 60th anniversary of the battle of Attu and the invasion of Kiska. The NPS, the Unalashka Corporation which owns and operates the historic site, the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and others marked the events with a series of films, displays, and school programs. Information on the site is also available on line at <http://www.nps.gov/aleu>. The World War II visitor center has taken on a greater education and outreach role with the hiring of a local resident, Roger Lockwood, as manager.

An older piece of Alaska history was highlighted in April during Alaska Archaeology Month. The Kijik National Historic Landmark, within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, was a well-populated Dena'ina Athabascan community in the 1800s and existed for some 900 years before being abandoned in the early 20th century.

Today, it is a 1,920-acre archaeological district containing at least 19 separate sites, one of which is thought to be the largest single Athabascan settlement in Alaska. "We've recorded more than 250 subterranean and semi-subterranean house structures," said park historian John Branson. "This area was a kind of Manhattan to the Dena'ina people." More than 3,000 food caches have been discovered in the area. These caches were large pits dug into the ground and were used by the Dena'ina to store food in order to survive the winter. The site is still incompletely mapped and excavated, and Kijik remains an area with significant research potential.

In September, the NPS joined with the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, the Imaginarium and the Dallas Museum of Natural History to deliver teacher workshops on dinosaurs in Alaska. In addition, speakers visited with more than 1,000 Anchorage School District students about fossils in national parks, including recent hadrosaur finds in Aniakchak National Monument. The programs were timed to coincide with the opening of the museum's popular T-Rex exhibit.

The Alaska Public Lands Information Centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks remain one of the Service's focal points for resource education and information. Programs on topics such as the Klondike Gold Rush, Alaska's Native heritage and wildlife were presented to nearly 12,000 students last year.

On-line education efforts continued to grow in 2003 with the expansion of the ParkWise web site. Standards-based curriculum in a variety of subject areas, lesson plans, photographs and class project ideas are available at

<http://www.nps.gov/akso/ParkWise>



The Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Anchorage offers a variety of educational puppet shows for children. One of the most popular is the story of "The Three Little Pigs" told from the wolf's perspective.



Greening of the Parks

Parks and visitors in the Alaska Region are benefiting from several projects that are making facilities and operations more “green.”

In Kenai Fjords, visitors who walk toward the ancient ice of Exit Glacier will walk past some of the newest available energy technology. The fuel cell electrical system, located at the park’s new Nature Center, will provide power and heat to the visitor facilities at the popular visitor destination.

The 5-kilowatt solid oxide fuel cell uses propane as its hydrogen source, with the hydrogen in turn being used to generate electricity. The Exit Glacier project is the first time such a system has been used in Alaska in an area with no other commercial electrical source.

The project is funded by the NPS in conjunction with a \$70,000 grant from the Propane Education & Research Council and a \$25,000 grant from the Alaska Energy Authority through the Denali Commission. An additional \$35,000 from the University of Alaska’s Arctic Energy Technology Development Laboratory is planned to evaluate and monitor the fuel cell’s performance.

At Denali’s Wonder Lake Range Station, a 30-kilowatt diesel generator used to run 24 hours a day, powering lights, radios, and pumps but the noisy diesel unit marred a portion of the spectacular quiet for which the park’s wilderness is world renowned.

Using grants and guidance from other federal agencies, Denali installed a new hybrid system consisting of a 12-kilowatt, propane-fueled generator augmented by a battery storage system and photovoltaic panels. The generator now runs only eight hours every fourth day to recharge the batteries. The \$45,000 project reduced fuel consumption at the site by 50 percent, or 2,500 gallons, reduced emissions of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrous oxide, and dramatically cut the maintenance requirements. The work at Wonder Lake and other projects helped the park earn one of nine Department of the Interior 2003 Environmental Achievement Awards.

To the south, Glacier Bay National Park earned a \$31,000 Unilever “Recycling at Work” in 2003, allowing for construction of an accessible restroom and covered assembly area near the dock at Bartlett Cove. An important component of the project is 2,500 square feet of Unilever’s recycled plastic Durawood lumber for the decking. The recycled plastic decking is easier to maintain than wood and less prone to become covered with slippery mold.



Fiscal Year 2003 Expense Report, Alaska Region

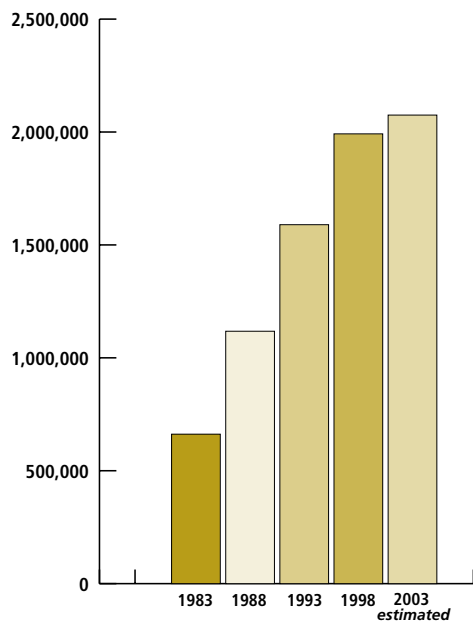
Construction		
Denali front country	\$8,020,419	
Glacier Bay utilities, hydro study	\$53,188	
Glacier Bay maintenance facility	\$63,568	
Sitka collections, visitor center	\$166,505	
Wrangell-St. Elias visitor center	\$52,488	\$8,356,167
Land Acquisition		\$3,987,635
Operations		
Personal services (salaries, benefits, etc.)	\$47,761,423	
Travel (within parks and Lower 48)	\$2,902,344	
Transportation (supplies and equipment)	\$1,757,194	
Rent, communications, utilities	\$1,239,106	
Printing and copying	\$196,087	
Services (aircraft rental, architecture and design, contracts)	\$17,697,661	
Supplies and materials	\$5,305,324	
Equipment (computers, vehicles, etc.)	\$1,376,951	
Land and structures	\$122,959	
Glacier Bay fisheries compensation (one time expense)	\$21,517,785	
Other (grants, insurance, claims, etc.)	\$5,088,182	
	Total	\$104,965,015

Recent Beringia Projects with NPS Partners

The National Park Service funds projects in partnership with community organizations and academic institutions. The topics are of scientific and local importance in the Beringia Region of western Alaska and eastern Chukotka. The work averages one to three years in length and includes Russian collaboration through comparative studies, exchange and training of participants, or translation of final reports.

Alaska Nanuuq Commission: Cultural Values of Polar Bears in Chukotka	\$32,050
University of Alaska Fairbanks: Rural Development Exchange	\$39,741
King Island IRA: Song and Dance Preservation	\$40,000
National Park Service: Russian Participation in Mammoth Conference	\$21,000
National Park Service, Russian Elder Consultation on Exhibit	\$29,018
Nome Community Center, After-school program on Native traditions	\$33,706
North Slope Borough: Biosampling of Grey and Bowhead Whales	\$33,558
University of Alaska: Online database for Chukotka Flora Collection	\$25,756
Alaska Pacific University: Beringia Teacher Workshop	\$20,380
University of Alaska: Chukotka Tourism Development and Training	\$24,000
Richard Bland & Associates: Russian Book Translation	\$11,730
World Wildlife Fund: Teacher Training in US and Russia	\$25,514
Alaska SeaLife Center: Web-based writing curriculum	\$16,200
Total	\$352,653

Visitation to Alaska's National Parks



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